

West Coast dealers leverage homegrown appointment system to boost orders

"It's been a goldmine" says Beaverton Toyota service director.

A few years ago, service manager Jerry Jerome didn't like how his staff had to handle incoming customer calls and schedule appointments. But unlike some people, Jerry went beyond griping and created his own system.

"Four or five years ago we were overwhelmed with phone calls," he told *Service Manager* last month. He initially worked with a software programmer to come up with an automated system to handle and schedule oil changes, but Jerry said he quickly saw the value in the system and expanded it to include all appointments.

He's using the system, called Autosked, now in his Beaverton Toyota dealership, where he's Parts & Service Director. Year-to-date Autosked has handled about 3,600 of the 27,000 total appointments his dealership has made with customers. About 1,500 came in via phone and about 2,000 via the Internet.

And it's not just oil changes the system is helping him to generate. Of those 3,600 online or phone Autosked appointments, he said 1,188 were maintenance work beyond oil changes.

"It's been a goldmine," according to Jerry.

"It's a fantastic system; our service managers use it all the time," agreed Don Warshawer, Operations Manager at Michael's Toyota in Washington State. He's been using Autosked for about a year at his dealership.

Jerry is about to start working with a service manager at a Chevrolet dealership, and Autosked is also up and running at Vancouver Toyota and Parker Toyota in Idaho, he said.

Easy Training

Jerry oversaw the training at Mr. Warshawer's dealership about a year ago. He gave the call center team a CD to watch, and within

fifteen minutes "they pretty much got it," he said.

"The system adapts very easily to your existing Reynolds & Reynolds, or ADP system. Autosked downloads your existing customer, vehicle, special service campaign, op-codes and vehicle history records each night. You'll be using all the same information you're already familiar with, but with functionality your service staff will appreciate," Jerry said.

Three ways Autosked can boost CSI:

Customer Phone Appointments: Autosked can intercept the customers call to the service department and offers a choice to use 'the automated system.' Customers can make their own real-time appointment by using the dial pad of their phone. After accessing the vehicles service history records, Autosked offers a tailored service recommendation. Appointments can be made 24/7, take about a

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**New system
helps promote
service "by
appointment"**

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minute, and upon request, generate a confirmation call.

Customer Web Appointments: Linked from a dealer's web page, Autosked provides real-time (not e-mail) scheduling. Like the phone system, the customer gets a tailored service recommendation for their vehicle and can schedule an appointment in real time, 24/7. An instant confirmation e-mail is delivered to the customer.

Advisor Appointments: Service advisors can use the scheduling system as a 'front-end' to the DMS. Customer search, vehicle identification (automatically decodes the VIN), history, recommendations, and appointments in just a few clicks, in 20 seconds or less, Jerry said. During customer reception, once the "tag" and "mileage" are entered, the R.O. is automatically created in the DMS and prints in a few seconds.

The appointment spacing and production work load or 'hour pool' can be set specific to each team or service advisor skills and capabilities. And unlike DMS systems, Jerry says Autosked can be set to the speed of respective advisors/teams. "I can adjust the appointments for each, so a faster tech might have 15 minutes allotted for something and a slower tech might have 20 minutes."

Autosked's appointment control is a 'front-end' to a DMS. Dealership advisors and/or call centers can also make an ap-

pointment and receive a customer in about 20 seconds.

Customers can also make their own real-time appointments and get instant confirmations 24/7 using Autosked's phone (IVR) interface and/or Autosked's web booking engine from your website.

Bottom-line: 30% to 50% of your appointments are made without a service advisor. That has helped on up-selling, Mr. Jerome said, because advisors often would just book the oil change the customer called about without suggesting other work that might be about due. Instead, Autosked prompts customers to consider that once they are in the system.

"I was blown away to see, when I looked at the start of a new day, 10 or 15 paying services including 30K and 60K services on the schedule from overnight use by our customers. It's clear to me that many customers will accept 'the systems' recommendations much easier than a service advisor or appointment clerk." Autosked's automated confirmation calls and e-mails also cut way down on no-shows.

Autosked's reminder system of automated phone calls and e-mails is designed to eliminate costly service reminder letters. "You can turn saved advisor time into additional jobs and revenues, provide the ultimate in customer access to the schedule, and greatly improve customer satisfaction and CSI ratings." ♦

For more information, go to www.autosked.com or call owner Walter Gorski at (480) 279-3651.

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